

# Ready Set Wilmette

## Environmental and Energy Commission Workshop

The Village of Wilmette Comprehensive Plan · Date: March 2, 2022



On Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> the Ready Set Wilmette team met with the Village's Environmental and Energy Commission to discuss the Comprehensive Plan process, review Village sustainability efforts, and consider what aspects of sustainability are the most important to the Village today - and what they might be in the future. The meeting was led by the team's sustainability experts from Emmons & Olivier Resources, In. (EOR), Brett Emmons and Allison Mark.

This workshop helped to focus understanding of the Commission's perspectives on sustainability in Wilmette, including the myriad of connections between sustainability and the other themes of the Comprehensive Plan. The conversation focused on answering these questions:

### **How does Wilmette define sustainability? Do the Greenest Region Compact's (GRC) ten pillars align with sustainability in Wilmette? How so? Or why not?**

- The Wilmette Strategic Sustainability Plan was organized around the ten pillars, and actions and efforts that align with the goals in Wilmette help describe the Village's priorities.
- Some pillars resonate more than others – such as energy, urban forestry, and habitats.
- Efforts in Wilmette have meant the addition of native plants in several areas of town, including the downtown, Elmwood Dunes, Gillson Park, and Wilmette Library.
- There are some concerns about how Wilmette can make the greatest impact with regard to energy and climate change.
- Efforts toward improving habitat in Wilmette is exciting.
- Recent UN Reports and other research has indicated that time is running out – there are concerns about where to focus efforts to truly make a difference.
- Wilmette is served by ComEd, and in this region electricity is generated by nuclear power.
- Wilmette is very engaged and the EEC anticipates lots of interest in the recently established community solar program.
- Waste + recycling is important – the Village provides the option but does not have any metrics to understand the local impacts – do our recyclables actually get recycled?
  - Are residential and commercial users alike both active contributors to recycling?

- The Village Center Plan focused on enhancing transit-oriented development and that has been implemented through several new developments since adoption.
- Sustainability also means affordability – can we, as a community, afford to make changes and keep them up over the long term? If not, those actions are not sustainable economically...
- Sustainability and active transportation are inherently linked.

### **On which pillars is Wilmette doing well? Where does the Village need to improve?**

- WELL: Recycling efforts
- WELL: Water – drinking water and stormwater management
- WELL: High community support and interest today, compared to the past.
- WELL: Bikeability and walkability – plans were just adopted to make improvements; implementation of the plan is the next step.
- IMPROVEMENT: Habitat and land use – awareness is slowly building about the need to protect natural habitats, species, benefits of dark skies, native plantings...
- IMPROVEMENT: Electric vehicles (EVs) – interest and adoption of EVs is growing, but more is needed to foster and enable infrastructure to allow a greater transition.
- IMPROVEMENT: Transportation and the use of Public Transit – Wilmette has really good access, but usage is minimal. This is also driving the reduction of service which in turn reduces usage.
- IMPROVEMENT: Bike and pedestrian supportive infrastructure, such as bike storage throughout the community.
- IMPROVEMENT: Better integration of sustainability themes with Village efforts, such as reducing conflicts, e.g. encouraging lighting for safety while also promoting dark skies.
- IMPROVEMENT: Stormwater management and impervious surfaces are directly correlated. Many residential demolitions of smaller homes have resulted in new larger homes, reducing the stock of more affordable starter homes and adding impervious surfaces.
- IMPROVEMENT: Zoning regulations often seem to contradict sustainability efforts – need more alignment.

### **What are your thoughts on community support?**

- There seems to generally be support for moving forward on sustainability initiatives and efforts, but concrete actions are needed to help steer residents.
- The community solar program is already very popular.
- New residents are looking for a walkable community.
- More and more gardens are including native plants.
- There was lots of support for the sustainability plan.
- The Village supports preservation and historical charm, including the brick streets and streetlights.
- We own our source of water.
- Village intends to hire a full-time sustainability coordinator.

The meeting concluded with an overview of next steps in the plan making process.

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